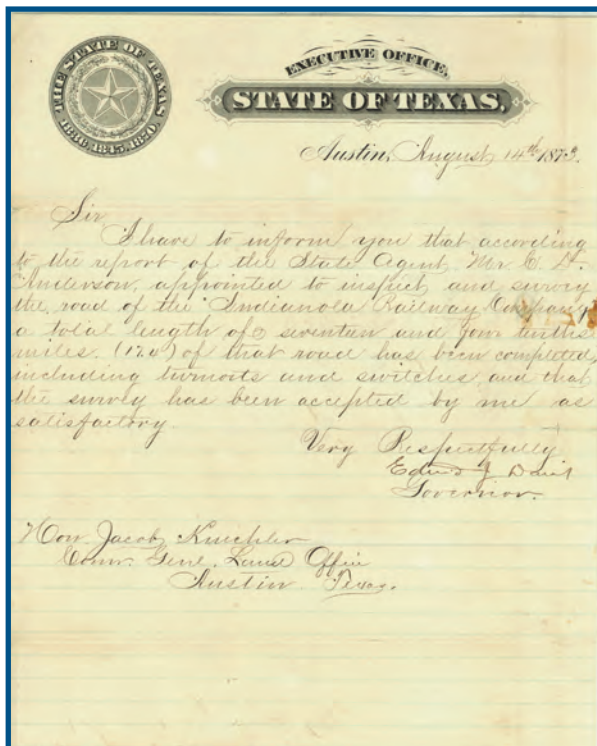




# *Saving* TEXAS HISTORY

The Texas General Land Office  
Archives and Records Newsletter  
*Jerry Patterson, Commissioner*  
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*A letter from Governor E.J. Davis to Land Commissioner Jacob Kuechler in Railroad Contract file #8 regarding the Indianola Railroad Company and turning over land certificates.*

## GLO Railroad Contracts: Land-for- Rail Program in 19th Century Texas

*by James Harkins*

*"Justice to the railroads, to the state, and to the truth of history calls for a telling of the great cooperative undertaking between the state and the railroads."*

*~S.G. Reed*

**T**he Texas General Land Office railroad contracts are among the most important, yet least studied documents at the agency. There are a myriad of reasons why the railroad contracts played such a crucial role in public land policy in Texas, including the establishment of a viable transportation infrastructure during the 19th century, kicking off an industrial renaissance in Texas, and helping to fund public education. While perhaps not as compelling as a David Crockett land certificate, these documents helped

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shape the makeup of Texas in the late 19th century and helped redefine it as "The Empire State," at least for a short period of time.

The land-for-rail policy represented by these contracts lasted 27 years, from 1857-1884. It helped bring about unparalleled economic success for the state and its citizens through the generous inducement of millions of acres of public lands. The highly successful program continued until the Texas Supreme Court determined there was no longer unappropriated public domain to give away for any reason, rail related or otherwise.



*Map # 76208 - Langermann & Pressler's 1879 Pocket Map of the State of Texas shows the location of the Indianola Railroad.*

Prior to the program's inception, there were no rail lines in Texas despite the government chartering two different railroad companies as early as 1836. Construction began in earnest when the state offered land grants and loans in return for internal improvements. Initially, railroad charters allotted eight sections of land per mile of track. Then in 1854, the state doubled the incentive for construction by passing "An Act to encourage the construction of railroads in Texas by donations of lands," which allowed 16 sections of land per mile of rail, after the first 25 miles were completed. The law was renewed in 1876 after a brief period of repeal, and was in effect until 1882, when all land-granting programs ended. By the time the law was repealed for good, there were some 6,000 miles of track, with 2,765 of those miles constructed in the last two years of the program. To illustrate the importance of the policy that had been in place, in 1883, one year after the repeal of the law, only 189 miles of rail were built—significantly fewer than the previous year. Charles S. Potts makes the case that the railroad companies no longer had an incentive to build a more elaborate transportation grid without the generous inducement of land. The total cost of bringing railroads to Texas over that 27-year period was 32,153,878 acres. That massive landed investment, however, would soon pay off.

Certainly, Texas officials in the mid-19th century knew the importance of railroads and recognized the strategic location of Texas on the North American continent. In fact, Thomas Jefferson Chambers, when outlining his 1851 platform for governor said, "Texas holds in her grasp, not only the commerce of one-half of the Mexican states, and to a great extent the destinies of the city of New Orleans, but the control of the vast wealth which is to flow from California and the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic." It was evident to Chambers that the strategic location of Texas was key to future economic prosperity, and he recognized that railroads would be at the center of that success. While Chambers did not win the election, his ideas regarding the railroad industry in Texas proved to be true.

When viewing population and taxable property values for Texas from the 1850s through the 1880s, when the land-for-rail policy existed, one can see a sharp increase in popula-

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tion and property value with the ever-expanding presence of railroads. In 1850, when there were no railroads in Texas, the population was 212,592. Ten years and 311 miles later, the population had more than doubled in size. By 1870, 711 miles existed, and the population had once again jumped, to 818,519. By 1880, with 3,244 miles of track, the Texas population had nearly doubled again, to more than 1.5 million. In that same 30-year span, property values had increased by a factor of 10. Not all of Texas' growth was due to railroads, but new communities established along rail lines—and older ones that faded after being bypassed—demonstrate their impact.

An added benefit of the land-for-rail policy was the requirement of railroad firms to survey alternate sections of land for the Permanent School Fund. This saved the state millions of dollars in surveying costs and established millions of acres dedicated to public education. This would prove momentous when major oil and gas reserves were found on Permanent School Fund lands. With more than 32 million acres dedicated through railroad surveys to the fund, the alternate sections became one of its largest land holdings, exceeded only by submerged tracts in the Gulf of Mexico.

Companies like the Houston & Texas Central Railroad (H&TCRR), the Texas & New Orleans Railroad (T&NORR), and the Indianola Railroad Company are among the 42 different companies represented in this collection of contracts. These documents contain records and reports of the construction process, inventories of materials used to build the railroads, descriptions of the land that rail lines passed through, and special requests to and from the various railroad companies to the state. For example, as part of Railroad Contract File #8 for the Indianola Railroad Company, a letter written on July 1, 1873 to Governor E.J. Davis reports 17.4 miles of completed railroad, entitling the company to 713.6 land certificates worth 640 acres each, or 456,704 acres. Later in the letter, the president of the company requests a

“personal favor” in the form of faster issuance of land certificates in order to expedite other business deals. Governor Davis obliged, instructing the Land Commissioner to turn over the land certificates to the company.

Included within the same Railroad Contract File for the Indianola Railroad Company is an Inspection Report, also done on July 1, 1873. In it, the civil engineer and agent for the state of Texas, C.D. Anderson, reported to the governor, “In consequence of very recent and unusually heavy rains, the track was somewhat rough where it passed over what is called ‘hog wallow prairie’ and although the road bed is of ample width and hight [sic], it is being raised an additional foot with gravel brought from the upper portion of the road. This cannot fail to secure stability and smoothness to the track. The crossties are of Pensacola pine, in a good state of preservation, and number about 2400 to the mile. The rails are of the best English iron of sufficient weight and connected by the fish bar and lip-chair.” This is a great example of information regarding early Texas and construction techniques found in this collection.

S.G. Reed suggested that a partnership between private interests and the state can bring about great results, as seen in the land-for-rail program. Now the Railroad Contracts themselves need conservation work, which will require a partnership between the Land Office and private interests through donations to the Save Texas History program. Already these documents have been organized, cataloged and prepared for scanning, and soon will be made available online in high-quality PDF format. These important, yet oft neglected documents tell an important chapter in the history of Texas. They need extensive conservation work, and the public is encouraged to donate to this worthy cause.

To learn more about the Railroad Contracts and their unique history, please visit the Land Office Archives online at [www.glo.texas.gov](http://www.glo.texas.gov), or call 1.800.998.4GLO. ✨

## Desired Results from Land Grants to Railroad Program

Speed the construction of an adequate transportation system

Promote settlement and increase population

Increase the amount of taxable property which would bring in more tax revenue

Provide the state a free survey of alternate sections of Permanent School Fund lands

Increase the value of the public lands



# Save Texas History Symposium a Huge Success

**D**esigned for scholars and hobbyists alike, the Save Texas History Symposium was a huge success and a springboard for future events. “The Save Texas History program on discovering Spanish and Mexican Texas was one of the best,” said Martha Utterback, Assistant Director of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library. She was one of 189 symposium attendees at the November 6 event at the Texas General Land Office in Austin.



*Commissioner Jerry Patterson speaks at the Inaugural Save Texas History Symposium.*

“This event was a way for us to showcase many of the diverse historical records housed at the GLO and to articulate the work that we do here,” said Commissioner Jerry Patterson.

“The documents housed at the GLO are the foundation for the settlement of Texas. And the Spanish Collection, which was highlighted at this event, is the basis of the entire Archives of the GLO. Without these documents, and the actions they represent, there would not be a Texas as we know it today, which is why we ask all Texans to get involved and stand their ground by helping Save Texas History.”

Some attendees came for the morning speakers, which consisted of an “invocation of past spirits of Texas,” as moderator Galen Greaser explained.

“We had a monopoly on Official Texas State Historians with Dr. Frank de la Teja and Dr. Light Cummins at this event,” Patterson said. “Add to that the fact that we had the Dean of Borderland Studies in Dr. Felix Almaraz, Jr., and I know that we offered the public some of the preeminent minds on the topic of Spanish and Mexican Texas.”

Kent Calder, Executive Director of the Texas State Historical Association (TSHA), also spoke briefly of the work the TSHA is doing to promote the study of Texas history across the state.

While many came for the speakers, others came for the diverse afternoon activities, all of which touched upon some aspect of the history of the Land Office. Break-out sessions included paper making and operating a printing press, tours of the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, a four-part genealogical workshop, and a land surveying exercise at the Capitol. “The demonstration of early land surveying on the Capitol lawn was especially useful and interesting,” Utterback said. The exercise was led by the Land Office’s Director of Surveying Bill O’Hara and was sponsored by the Texas Society of Professional Surveyors.

For many, the highlight of the symposium was the tour of the Land Office Archives. Janet Neuman described the feeling of seeing actual documents of Texas heroes as “a thrill,” adding that “the Land Office is fortunate to have researchers who love their subject and who can bring history to life for their visitors.”



*GLO surveyor Bill O'Hara explains how pioneer land surveyors would have operated during the 19th century.*

The symposium was made possible in part through a grant from Humanities Texas—the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities—and the generous assistance of the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, TexasTejano.com, the Texas Society of Professional Surveyors ([www.tsps.org](http://www.tsps.org)) and the Texas State Historical Association ([www.tshaonline.org](http://www.tshaonline.org)). For more information about the Archives of the Land Office or giving to the Save Texas History program, please go to [www.savetexashistory.org](http://www.savetexashistory.org). ✨

# Texas General Land Office Acquires Twichell Survey Records

by Lauren Goodley

The Archives and Records Program of the Texas General Land Office is pleased to announce the recent acquisition of the Twichell Survey Records. Willis Day Twichell (1864-1959), a prominent surveyor in West Texas and the Panhandle from 1885 until his death in 1959, surveyed a vast amount of land, including the XIT Ranch and the disputed Texas-New Mexico boundary along the 103rd meridian. His work resulted in funding for the State Capitol and public education in Texas, helped build railroads and was integral to the exploration of oil and gas in West Texas throughout the 20th century.

Originally brought to Texas by an immigration company to plat the town of Garden City, Twichell ultimately laid out more than 40 towns and surveyed lands in 165 of Texas' 254 counties as well as locations in New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma and northern Mexico.



*W.D. Twichell surveys the 103rd meridian between Texas and New Mexico in 1903. Note the surveying equipment box to Twichell's side and the tripod-mounted solar compass standing over the surveying monument (a rock mound) being documented by the photo. A closer look reveals a stack of wolf hides on the ground and an antelope skull on the fence post.*

The Twichell Survey Records were donated to the Land Office by a consortium of four oil companies operating in the Midland area: Chevron U.S.A. Inc., Atlantic Richfield Company, ConocoPhillips Company and ExxonMobil Corporation. The Twichell Survey Records had been held by the consortium since 1959 after they were purchased from the Twichell family. Their deposit at the Land Office Archives will make them publicly available for the first time.

"Our goal is to have the Twichell Papers available to researchers by January 2011," said Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. "This shows the commitment of the Land Office and Save Texas History program to preserve the records that document the history of this great state and make them widely available."

Dating from the mid-1800s to the 1960s, the records are comprised of 119 linear feet of maps and 56 linear feet of field books, and correspondence and photographs from the records of Twichell and several other West Texas surveyors, including Robert Estes, Sylvan Sanders and Edward Saunders. Almost 50,000 pages of correspondence in the papers reflect business with the Land Office, private clients, or between surveyors, and include hundreds of field books, 200 finished maps, field notes and plats of land. Maps and files will remain organized as they arrived, by county and by land block or area.

"The Twichell Survey Records are a treasure trove of magnificent proportions," said archivist and historian David B. Gracy. "Beyond the specific records of surveys, Twichell's correspondence with landowners and their agents is rich in documentation of settlement and land use, adding an important dimension to the survey records. Snapshots taken by the surveying crews of the land over which they worked provide a particularly outstanding document of land use in themselves, and by comparison with contemporary photographs, of land change."

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*Examples of field books found in the Twichell Survey Records. Field books—the notebooks that surveyors make on the ground—are particularly valuable as they contain sketches, computations and notes from which official field notes and maps are created.*

These records greatly complement the Land Office holdings of county maps, survey files and field notes for the West Texas and Panhandle regions. The records will be available to the public beginning January 3, 2011. A finding aid will be posted on Texas Archival Resources Online (TARO) soon thereafter, and maps and select small-format documents will be digitized and available online on the Land Office website by January 1, 2012.

“The Twichell records document an important part of the history of West Texas and the Panhandle,” Patterson said. “We’re excited about their addition to the most important collection of maps and records documenting the history of Texas land.”

It will cost about \$20,000 to preserve and digitally scan the Twichell records so the public can have total access to them. If you are interested in donating to the conservation of the Twichell records through the General Land Office’s Save Texas History program, please call the Archives and Records Program of the Texas General Land Office at 512.463.5277 or e-mail [archives@glo.texas.gov](mailto:archives@glo.texas.gov). ✨

## THE CRASH AT CRUSH

SEPTEMBER 1896 AND A PUBLICITY STUNT ENDS IN DISASTER.



This week in Texas History, brought to you by this station and the Save Texas History program of the General Land Office.

September 15th, 1896. North of Waco. To boost ridership, railroad promoter William Crush is staging the crash of two steam trains for a crowd of onlookers. The spectacle draws 40,000 to a hastily built railstop, aptly named ... Crush.

At 5 p.m., Engines 999 and 1001 start down the track. Moments later ... they collide! The boilers explode, wounding six spectators and killing two.

Despite the disaster, the public loves it. Scott Joplin even writes a tune celebrating the event.

The Crash at Crush occurred 111 years ago,  
This Week in Texas History.

HEAR THIS AT [WWW.THISWEEKINTEXASHISTORY.ORG](http://WWW.THISWEEKINTEXASHISTORY.ORG)

# Save Texas History Texas Travels Essay Contest Enters Third Year

Exploring the rich history of the Lone Star State is its own reward, but the Texas General Land Office's Save Texas History program is also offering fourth- and seventh-grade students a chance to win a fun-filled weekend in San Antonio—including round-trip airline tickets on Southwest Airlines and accommodations provided by San Antonio Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"The idea behind this contest is to inspire Texas school kids to be proud of our heritage as Texans," Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson said. "The more anyone knows about the story of Texas, the more they will love our state."

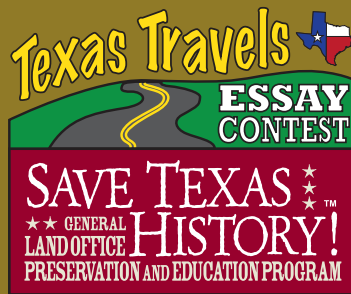


*Commissioner Jerry Patterson and last year's fourth-grade winner Bailey Grones.*

Participation in the contest grows each year with more than 1,400 seventh graders entering in 2010, as well as the addition of fourth graders who contributed some 1,020 entries. Last year's seventh-grade winner was Ashley Dark of Coppell Middle School North. Her entry described the 1947 Texas City industrial explosion through the eyes of a fireman. Ashley captured the judges' imaginations with vivid details of the infamous day that placed Texas City forever in history. She is the daughter of Kelly and James Dark and a student of Anthony Smith. Ashley and her classmates participated in a Skype awards presentation with Commissioner Patterson last June.

Bailey A. Grones of East Side Intermediate School in Palacios won top honors for the fourth-grade division. Writing about French explorer La Salle, she artfully described his experiences, from eating venison and Texas pecans to the itch of a mosquito bite. Bailey is the daughter of Scott and Kelly Grones and a student of Melody Egg. Bailey and her grandparents attended a presentation in her honor with Commissioner Patterson in Austin in June. \*

## CALL FOR ENTRIES



Fourth- and seventh-grade students with a love of Texas history have the chance to win a fun-filled weekend in San Antonio—including round-trip airline tickets on Southwest Airlines—for simply writing an essay.

One grand prize winner per grade will receive round-trip airline

asked to write from the perspective of a well-known explorer of Texas. Essays will be judged on originality of idea, historical accuracy and organization. Proper grammar, spelling and punctuation count.

tickets for four to San Antonio from any Southwest Airlines destination in Texas and hotel accommodations for two nights.

All essays must be postmarked by February 26, 2011.

Seventh-graders will write about the historical significance of their favorite city and why it was important to the development of Texas. Fourth-graders are

All public, private and home-schooled students of appropriate age for the fourth grade or seventh grade are eligible.



*Proud to be the Official Airline of the  
Save Texas History Essay Contest™*



*San Antonio Convention & Visitors Bureau*

For more details, visit [SaveTexasHistory.org](http://SaveTexasHistory.org)

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